Accountability Report

2015–2016

Executive Council Office

NOVA SCOTIA

Table of Contents

A. Accountability Statement 3

B. Message from the Minister 4

C. Priorities and Accomplishments 5

D. Financial Results 9

E. Annual Report Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act 10

A. Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report for the Executive Council Office (including the former Office of Planning and Priorities) for the year ended March 31, 2016, is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against the Offices' joint statement of mandate for the fiscal year 2015-2016.

The report is a complete and accurate representation of our office's performance and outcomes relative to the goals and priorities set out in the joint statement of mandate for the year 2015-16.

The Honourable Stephen McNeil
President of the Executive Council

Laura Lee Langley
Clerk of the Executive Council
Deputy Minister to the Premier

Jeannine Lagassé
Secretary to the Executive Council

B. Message from the President of the Executive Council

I am pleased to present the accountability report of the Executive Council Office (ECO), including the former Office of Planning and Priorities (OPP), for the fiscal year 2015–2016. The two offices merged on January 28, 2016 and the functions of both offices have been maintained in the combined entity.

Acting as a secretariat, ECO is non-departmental in function and purpose. It serves the Executive Council (Cabinet) and its committees. The office aims to ensure that the business of Cabinet and its committees is conducted in a timely, efficient manner.

ECO manages corporate planning, implementation of government priorities and policy decisions to ensure that they are communicated and administered in a professional and accountable manner. A primary area of focus in developing and advancing the priorities of government is alignment and coordination with government and department strategies and plans. In addition, ECO provides strategic policy advice, works to increase and align policy capacity across government, and provides advice and support regarding governance and the appointments to agencies, boards and commissions.

On February 12, 2014, the One Nova Scotia Commission on Building Our New Economy released its report containing 19 goals for transforming the economy and our demography. In response, on June 2, 2014, the government named 15 members to the One Nova Scotia Coalition (the Coalition), a multi-partite group of volunteers from across political parties, sectors and regions with a mandate to develop a 10-year comprehensive economic development plan. The former OPP continued to act as Secretariat for the Coalition in 2015-16. In November, 2015, the Coalition released *WE CHOOSE NOW - A Playbook for Nova Scotians*, a 10 year Collaborative Development Plan to address the economic and demographic challenges articulated in the *One Nova Scotian Commission Report on Building our New Economy*.

The Honourable Stephen McNeil, President of the Executive Council

C. Priorities and Accomplishments

ECO and the former OPP identified three strategic outcomes for 2015-2016:

1. Executive Council and its Committees are fully supported;
2. Government priorities are advanced through leadership in planning and policy development and policy alignment across government;
3. Major policy initiatives and corporate projects are facilitated towards achievement of the 19 OneNS goals.

Measurement of Performance

In order to measure service performance, in June 2016, ECO conducted a survey of over 275 clients with which they interact on a frequent basis including: all departments, public service organizations, and crown corporations.

A separate survey was sent to the ONE NS Coalition members and affiliates (16 in total).

Questions in the surveys related to the effectiveness of services provided. The survey sought feedback on priorities identified in the 2015-2016 Statement of Mandate and the results provided targets and future performance comparisons.

Overall, the response rate to the main survey was 31.5%. This exceeds the response rate last year of 28%. The response rate to the ONE NS survey was 50%.

Highlights of the survey responses are found below under each relevant Core Business Area. The responses for "somewhat agree" and "strongly agree" are aggregated as indicative of the perceived performance for each of the respective Core Business Area issues. Also, each performance measure is addressed in terms of how the Core Business Area will respond to maintain or improve the perceived performance.

The performance of the Public Engagement Support Unit (PESU) was not measured in 2015-16. While the PESU did work with some departments on engagement, the bulk of their work was in supporting the work of the ONE NS Coalition and is addressed in the ONE NS survey.

A copy of the performance-related survey questions and gross responses are attached in Appendix A. Verbatim responses to open-ended questions are not provided for reasons of confidentiality.

Strategic Outcome 1: Support to Executive Council and its committees

Outcome: Executive Council and Committees are fully supported.

- 82% of the 2015-16 respondents agree that the ECO's submissions guide is useful and informative. This is an increase of 10% from the previous year. ECO will work toward increasing this measure to a satisfaction level of 85 %.

- 81% of respondents agree that ECO provided helpful and timely advice and guidance regarding the submissions process. Last year's response rate was 90%. ECO's goal will be to increase this measure to 85%.

- 80% of respondents agree OPP provided helpful and timely guidance regarding the submission process, up from 78% last year.

- 91% of respondents agree that ECO provided timely advice and guidance regarding the content of submissions. This is a 6% increase from the previous year. With the restructuring of ECO and OPP and the creation of the Cabinet Advisor role, departments will have more direct support throughout the entire policy development process. ECO will strive to maintain a satisfaction level of 85% for this measure.

- 89% of respondents agreed that OPP provided helpful and timely advice and guidance regarding the content of submissions. This represents an increase of 18% in the measure from the previous year.

- 80% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that decisions of Cabinet and its Committees were communicated in a timely manner. This is a 13% decrease from the previous year. ECO will revisit the distribution and communication process and strive to increase this measure to 85%.

ECO provides policy support and guidance in respect of the governance and accountability of provincial agencies, boards and commissions (ABCs). It also oversees the process of appointment of citizens to ABCs.

- 82% of respondents agreed that the appointments process resources were useful (a decrease of 9% from the previous year) and 85% of respondents agreed that they received helpful advice with the ABC appointments process (a decrease of 11% from the previous year). ECO will revisit the information and training provided to ABC departmental contacts to ensure the appointments process and resources are clearly understood.

- 70% of respondents agreed that they received timely advice and guidance regarding the governance and accountability of a government agency (this is an increase of 1%). ECO will continue to work at increasing this measure to a satisfaction level of 85%.

- 90% of respondents consulted the Corporate Administrative Policies within the past year. This is a decrease of 10% from the previous year (100%). Of these respondents 38% receive notifications of amendments to the policies through the listserv. ECO will work to promote the benefit of being a member of the listserv group and work to increase this rate by 13% before the next reporting period.

- 83% of respondents agreed that the process for creating or amending a corporate policy is well known and accessible. ECO will strive to improve this measure to a satisfaction level of 85%

Strategic Outcome 2: Government priorities are advanced through leadership in planning and policy development and policy alignment across government.

Outcome: Stronger policy capacity and better cross departmental collaboration

- 78% of respondents felt OPP communicated government's goals and priorities clearly. This represents a decrease of 1% from the previous year. This continues to be a priority through OGP restructuring and the delivery of policy support services.

- 50% of respondents felt OPP facilitated the coordination of policy agendas across government. This was a 10% increase from the prior year. The restructuring of OGP and the creation of the Cabinet Advisor role were implemented to help address this issue by providing more up front support in departments.

- 67% of respondents agreed that OPP supported the development and implementation of government's core priorities. This measure is 10% higher than last year. There was increased attention paid to communicating core priorities to departments through the Cabinet Advisors, and integrating the core priorities into the business planning process.

- 28% said that OPP improved the systems, processes and procedures required for effective implementation of government's priorities. This represents a decrease of 15% from the previous year.

- The survey results indicate that work is required to provide better support for the development of policy capacity throughout government. There were 11 respondents to this particular question with 64% agreeing that OPP fulfilled this requirement while 18% were indifferent. The recent restructuring of ECO should help to address this issue by providing more up front policy advice and support in departments.

Strategic Outcome 3: Facilitation of major policy initiatives and corporate projects

Outcome: Progress towards the achievement of the 19 OneNS goals

100% of respondents agreed that OPP effectively:

- planned and managed the regular coalition meetings, and several special planning meetings, at sites across Nova Scotia.
- coordinated the collection and distribution of coalition meeting materials and results.
- assisted in the development and organization of material for the 10 year collaborative plan.
- coordinated and supported events designed to increase the public's knowledge of the work of the ONE NS Commission and Coalition

88% of respondents agreed that OPP organized and facilitated engagement events to enable collaboration with a representative cross-section of stakeholders for each of the priority areas outlined in the plan.

75% of respondents felt that there were enough opportunities made available to promote the work of the coalition.

88% of respondents agreed that OPP maintained and supplied ONE NS Commission and Coalition documents and materials, when requested, to assist in research and development of the plan. They also agreed that OPP staff provided research and analysis to inform the coalitions' use of a collaborative model in the development of the recommendations/plan.

D. Financial Results

	Estimate 2015-2016	Actual 2015-2016	Variance
Total - Gross Current ($000's)			
Office of Policy & Priorities	2,550	2,290	260
Executive Council Office	2,184	1,875	309
Total	4,734	4,165	569
Salaries and Benefits ($000's)			
Office of Policy & Priorities	2,158	1,907	251
Executive Council Office	1,601	1,421	180
Total	3,759	3,328	431
Funded Staff (FTEs)			
Office of Policy & Priorities	19	17.5	1.5
Executive Council Office	17	15.1	1.9
Total	36	32.6	3.4

E. Annual Report Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act

The *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act* was proclaimed into law on December 20, 2011. The Act provides for government employees to be able to come forward if they reasonably believe that a wrongdoing has been committed or is about to be committed and they are acting in good faith.

The Act also protects employees who do disclose from reprisals, by enabling them to lay a complaint of reprisal with the Labour Board.

A wrongdoing for the purpose of the Act is:

a) A contravention of provincial or federal laws or regulations
b) A misuse or gross mismanagement of public funds or assets
c) An act or omission that creates an imminent risk of a substantial and specific danger to the life, health, or safety of persons or the environment, or
d) Directing or counseling someone to commit a wrongdoing.

ECO/OPP have no items to report for 2015-16.

Information Required under Section18 of the Act	Fiscal Year 2015-2016
The number of disclosures received	0
The number of findings of wrongdoing	0
Details of each wrongdoing (insert separate row for each wrongdoing)	n/a
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing (insert separate row for each wrongdoing)	n/a